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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, March 3, 2023, at 9 a.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 2023

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Loving King of the universe, thank You that nothing can separate us from Your love. Remind us that we are surrounded by Your unconditional, positive regard, regardless of our faults and failures. Lord, help us to see that our anxieties and fears, our doubts and disappointments cannot diminish Your affection for us.

Today, bless the Members of this legislative body. Give them wisdom to see what needs to be done and the courage to do it. Lord, help them to persevere in doing Your will, knowing that a productive harvest is certain.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Colleen R. Lawless, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of Illinois.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. WARNOCK. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WARNOCK). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

HONORING JASON ARNO

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, before I get into my remarks this morning, I want to offer my thoughts and prayers to everyone affected by the four-alarm fire on Main Street in Buffalo, NY, yes-

terday, and I want to especially offer my condolences to the Buffalo Fire Department, which lost one of its firefighters, Jason Arno, in the line of duty during this horrible tragedy. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his family as well.

I want to thank all of the first responders who were on the scene. We are profoundly grateful for all you do to keep us safe every day.

DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS LUNCH

Mr. President, now on the President's visit to our caucus lunch this afternoon, later today, Senate Democrats will welcome President Biden to the Capitol for a special caucus lunch to talk about our agenda for the 118th Congress.

I predict that today's conversation will reemphasize a couple of important points. Unlike the other party, Democrats are united. We have a great story to tell about our work over the last 2 years, and we are ready to keep working in a bipartisan way to make life better for the American people.

If the last 2 years focused on getting our agenda passed into law, one of the focuses of our lunch will be on how the next 2 years will be about implementing that agenda. Legislation must and will continue, but implementation will also be a top priority.

Democrats are making sure that Americans see our agenda—see our agenda in their own backyards, on their way to work, and when they balance their checkbooks. Americans will see our agenda as the roads and bridges and highways they use every day finally get the fixes that are so needed, and Americans will see our agenda in

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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action as manufacturing—good-paying manufacturing jobs, high-end jobs—returns to our shore, as new innovations get developed here at home.

We will also talk with President Biden about one of the most important priorities that defines our party: building ladders to help people get into the middle class and helping people who are already in the middle class stay there.

We will continue protecting Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid from the hard right. We will keep investing in infrastructure jobs and good-paying union jobs, and we will hold abusive corporations accountable for putting profits over people's safety.

We are also going to make sure that, once people make it into the middle class, they have the tools to stay in the middle class. That was precisely the reasoning behind our work on IRA, on CHIPS and Science, on pushing for student debt relief and increasing Pell grants, and so much more.

I expect we will also discuss how we will keep Americans safe and keep democracy alive in the 21st century. One year into Putin's violent assault on Ukraine, the support for Ukraine will hold firm, and that, praise God, has been very bipartisan. Leader McCONNELL and I are united in that regard.

So we will focus on taking an all-of-above approach to outcompete President Xi and the Chinese Communist Party. CHIPS was an important step in that direction, but we cannot relent. The administration has already taken a few Executive actions that will increase our ability to bring jobs back here and prevent the Chinese from purloining our intellectual property. But we certainly cannot rest on our laurels.

Finally, and very importantly, we are going to talk about how Democrats will preserve our unity in the months ahead. The story here in Congress over the first few months of 2023 has been one of contrasts. Democrats are united on helping average Americans, while Republicans are divided, paralyzed by chaos, and so many of them doing the bidding of the ultrarich and the very well connected and powerful.

Republicans like to talk about standing up for average folks and fighting "wokeism"—whatever that means—but look at what they have actually done this year. They have given cover to wealthy tax cheats, escalated their war on women, even tried to push a national sales tax that would raise taxes significantly—up to 30 percent—for average families.

How the heck is an average family going to pay 30 percent more for everything they buy? What planet are these folks on?

Nowhere else is the contrast between Democrats and Republicans more glaring than when it comes to raising the debt ceiling. President Biden and Senate and House Democrats have been clear from the very beginning that we are united on what our plan is: Both sides must come together and raise the

debt ceiling without engaging in hostage-taking, brinksmanship, or political blackmail.

Speaker MCCARTHY, however, is unable to unite his conference or explain what exactly the Republican plan is. The hard right is demanding that we agree to spending cuts in exchange for their votes. But to this day, there is no consensus and no clarity about what cuts Republicans want.

Speaker MCCARTHY, it is March 2. Where is your plan? It is March 2, Speaker MCCARTHY. You have been talking about a plan for a while. Where is it? Where is your plan?

You say Social Security and Medicare is off the table. But until the American people see a plan, they cannot just take the Speaker at his word that Social Security and Medicare will be safe, because so many on his right flank—so many mainstream Republican Members even—have long pushed to have these programs changed.

And there is more that Americans have to worry about. What is the Republican plan on Medicaid or funding the police, on Pell grants, on defense, on food for kids? Will all of these things get cut from their plan?

Again, this goes back to the central problem with the Republican House majority. It will be exceedingly difficult and, in all likelihood, impossible for them to unite around a plan that they can pass with their 220-some-odd votes and that the American people will accept and like.

This contrast is going to keep growing and growing in the months ahead. During today's lunch, we will talk with the President about how we can make sure Americans see and understand the contrast. I thank President Biden for his time, and I very much look forward to having him here at our Capitol.

INSULIN

Mr. President, now on insulin, yesterday's news that Eli Lilly is capping insulin for patients at \$35 a month is a very big deal. That will make an enormous difference for the millions of Americans that rely on this drug to manage their diabetes.

I commend Eli Lilly for taking this much needed step, but, frankly, this should have happened a long time ago. There is no excuse for monthly insulin costing \$600, \$700, \$800 a month and people quaking in their boots about whether they can take half the dose, a quarter of the dose, no dose at all and getting even sicker. So we are happy to see that this company ends its terrible practice of keeping insulin prices high, and they deserve commendation.

It does bring up a few other points.

First, Eli Lilly's announcement is good progress, but still not close to enough. There is no substitute for legislation, such as the legislation you have been offering, Mr. President, Senator WARNOCK. There is no substitute for legislation that locks down a mandatory and permanent cap on insulin for all Americans, not just those who get insulin from certain companies.

Second, lowering insulin costs is a good policy that everyone on both sides should get behind. This should not be a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. It is something that affects people in every city in every State.

And, third, now is the time to finish the job and pass a bill to put a \$35 cap on insulin for all Americans.

Last year, we Democrats made good progress in the Inflation Reduction Act to lower insulin to \$35 for seniors on Medicare. It is my hope—it is my hope—to soon bring a bipartisan bill to lower prescription drug costs and cap insulin costs at \$35 for everyone—for everyone—to the floor and pass it with support from both sides of the aisle.

Let's get this done. It is so important for the American people. We Democrats are going to do all we can to get it done, hopefully, in a bipartisan way.

FOX NEWS

Mr. President, finally, on FOX News—there is a lot to talk about this morning. Earlier this week, we learned that Rupert Murdoch admitted during a deposition that he and FOX News executives knowingly—knowingly—broadcasted the Big Lie on their network despite many of them knowing it was completely bogus. When asked if he could have stepped in to stop it, Mr. Murdoch claimed that he could have but chose not to, and he expressed regret for not doing so.

With all due respect, expressing regret is not enough. I repeat, expressing regret on an issue so vital to the future of our democracy is just not enough. What Rupert Murdoch and FOX News executives and hosts have done is dangerous. When people doubt that elections are on the level, that is the beginning of the end of this wonderful democracy. Elections are our wellspring. When people don't believe they are legit, democracy starts flying out the window and some other form of autocracy comes in. We are not there yet, but FOX News and its commentators who have lied have helped sow some evil seeds in our body politic.

The wellspring of democracy is elections, and it is why this wonderful, great experiment has endured for so long. When conspiracy theories like the Big Lie are allowed to grow, when they are given a prime time spot on cable news—well, we all saw what could happen on January 6.

That is why I wrote a letter with Leader JEFFRIES to Mr. Murdoch this week, demanding that he should do what he should have done a long time ago: First, stop spreading lies about the election; second, stop sowing division; third, stop weakening faith in our democracy; and fourth, stop the commentators who continue to repeat the Big Lie even after so many at FOX, including Mr. Murdoch, admitted it was a lie, admitted they regretted it happened. Stop them from doing it.

Again, expressing regret is simply not enough.

In the light of mounting evidence that FOX News knowingly misled their